

SOUTHWESTERN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD UNIVERSITY
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Leading High-Impact Teams

LDR 5263-530

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Synthesis/Reflection Paper

This class has helped me understand many aspects of leading teams and how to act when you are not the main leader of an organization. For me, there are six main takeaways from the class. The first is how to lead a non-profit team effectively, which involves having a clear vision that everyone in the organization can follow. The second takeaway is how to cast a compelling vision to the team and its implications. Thirdly, how to create a healthy culture and the responsibility for everyone in the organization to reinforce it. The fourth principle is the principle of delegation and the three steps to delegate effectively. The fifth takeaway is the importance of clear communication for teams. Lastly, the principle of the 360-degree leader, which involves leading from anywhere in the organization.

The Effective Non-Profit Team

From “The Effective Non-Profit Team” lecture, my biggest takeaway was that “An organization begins to die the day it begins to be run for the benefit of the insiders and not the benefit of the outsiders” (Kennedy, 2021). This principle implies that their vision to reach unreached people, particularly for churches, should fuel their organization. This perspective should help a church make decisions based on reaching people far from God. A church needs to rethink the programs it offers and the wording it uses. Church leaders must ask themselves if they are looking at their ministry through the grid of the people who do not know Jesus, or are they doing ministry this to apiece a constituent of Christians? It is a process, especially for those who grew up in church, to think like people outside of church that have no context to anything about ministry.

The effective non-profit team is governed by what Maxwell calls “the law of the compass,” it refers to having a clear vision that helps direct people and gives teams confidence

that they are on the right path (2001, p. 90). Staying the same is not a compelling vision compared to our command to go and make disciples; that is our mission. However, staying the same is often convenient because it requires no extra effort. Staying the same involves no risk at first, but the risk that non-profits encounter when they forget their mission is stagnation and decline. Moreover, as a church, that is something we cannot allow.

The problem many churches face is that they are not excited about their present or their future; they are enamored with their past. I love celebrating history like anyone else, but I have noticed that churches that remain on mission are more excited about their future. God is always up to something; will I listen to what He is doing? Moreover, will I do something about it? He is always looking to add more people to his family. Am I willing to make space for them? That is what every church needs to ask themselves.

Casting Vision to the Team

Vision is essential to any organization because it sets the tone and helps people rally behind a goal. However, we often wonder how exactly we cast vision to our team so they can rally behind that vision. As Stanley notes, “The majority of the visions you cast will be centered on other people and their futures” (2005, p. 111). So a vision for an organization is not organized behind personal preferences or current reality; instead, it is about others and the future the organization envisions for them. In the case of a church, it is about the vision God has given it for a particular community or people group. Then, vision is not about a catchy slogan; it is about setting an organization’s culture. The leader’s job is to communicate the vision and stop it from drifting and contending for its survival.

Because vision tends to fade on its own, Dr. Kennedy gave us three essential things a vision must have to stick. Sticky visions are simple, understandable, and portable (Kennedy,

2021). The three key things a vision must have to stick are what Dr. Kennedy describes as three processes. These three processes take time; a leader must cast them and keep aligning the organization with them. Simple means not overcomplicating it. Understandable means that even a middle schooler could grasp the concept. Finally, portable refers to how easily we can help people remember the vision; this way, it stays front and center of the team.

Creating a Healthy Culture

It is easier to identify a healthy culture by what it is not; it is not stagnant or toxic. When organizations are stagnant, they do not execute because, As Dr. Kennedy mentioned in the lecture, “Execution is the art of follow-through” (2021). Execution implies movement. When things are stagnant, they become toxic. Execution requires 360-degree accountability; it is a whole team endeavor. When everyone in the team is after the same goal, they will ensure everyone is doing their part to achieve the primary goal (Lencioni, 2002, p. 215). So, accountability needs to exist at every level. However, the leader’s responsibility is to remind the team through his actions that he is not the only one in charge of keeping everyone accountable; they all share that duty (Lencioni, 2002, p. 216). It is demoralizing when teammates notice people are not held accountable for their actions.

A lack of accountability turns an organization toxic because everyone seeks their own departmental goals instead of working to achieve the organization’s primary goal (Lencioni, 2002, p. 216). Culture permeates every level of an organization. Therefore, everyone in the organization creates its culture (Smith, 2015, p. 6). However, the leader’s responsibility is to embody and model the way in every aspect to establish the desired organizational culture. The issue is that often people in leadership need to realize how much their actions impact their organization. People will follow what their leaders do and allow, so leaders must embody the

right culture for their people. Leaders who understand the dynamics of creating culture are thermostats that change the organization's temperature, not mere thermometers that only perceive temperature.

Delegation

We often misunderstand delegation as merely dropping off our tasks onto someone else's plate. Delegation is not about dumping but empowering and developing other people. According to Dr. Kennedy, there are three levels to developing delegation (2021)—first, the person delegating models how the other person's work must be done. Secondly, the delegator monitors how the other does it; they will let the other person do it while they guide them. Lastly, the delegator motivates the person by giving them complete ownership and asking them to report on how it went. When delegating, it is crucial to assess the level of growth a person has and ask if they are up for the challenge, or conversely, could this be a situation that could stretch them and help them grow because often, giving people a project that will stretch them benefits their development.

One way to promote delegation at every level of the organization is by fostering a shared consciousness and embracing a decentralized decision-making process. This type of environment empowers teams. Centralized decision-making slows down an organization because it creates silos. Unfortunately, those only work if the people at the top know everything about the operation. However, in the complex environments brought on by the twenty-first century, such as the ones depicted in Team of Teams, the top leadership of an organization cannot know what are the best decisions for every department (McChrystal, 2015, p. 193). Delegation and decentralized control are on the rise and will be a shaping force for the organizations of this century. To

become successful twenty-first-century organizations need to work on developing better delegation by establishing clear checkpoints along the way and asking honest questions.

Communication

Communication is crucial for every high-impact team. Having the right level of communication fosters trust and generates commitment (Gordon, 2015, p. 51). If an organization has too much communication, it can drown in paperwork. However, the opposite often creates gaps, resulting in misinformation occupying the space (Gordon, 2015, p. 52). Smith proposes that leaders must consistently assess the organization's communication dynamics at every level (2015, p. 59). In successful organizational cultures, leaders at all levels contend for their culture, using the correct values and communicating in a way everyone understands.

Dr. Kennedy states in his communication lecture that "Future leaders will communicate more by using questions" (2021). Rather than commanding people to perform actions, twenty-first-century leaders will communicate by asking the right questions. This dynamic could create ambiguity; however, it also has the potential to enable team members to become owners of the solutions, a technique that fosters teamwork and collaboration. Often as leaders, we have a set goal that we want to accomplish, and we orchestrate our team to accomplish our goals. Asking team members what they need of us eliminates confusion and fosters honesty; it will also reveal flaws in our thinking.

The 360-Degree Leader

The final insight I take from this course is on becoming a 360-degree leader. This principle involves developing positive relationships with the people with whom we work. This requires emotional intelligence, which involves self-awareness, self-management of emotions, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman et al., 2013, p. 30). So when leaders

exercise emotional intelligence, they can recognize and manage personal emotions, but they can also identify emotions in others and understand how to navigate these complexities.

A 360-degree leader is often not the top leader, but he can exert influence all around; to the people above him, next to him, and below him. Moreover, even when a person is not the number one leader of an organization, they can still exhibit leadership abilities such as caring, character, competence, consistency, and commitment (Kennedy, 2021). Furthermore, no matter the level at which they find themselves, leaders must show integrity by acting to the level of their calling, even when people are not watching.

In my experience, 360-degree leadership also deals with my relationship with myself. Often, when you are not the number one leader in an organization requires submission and giving up certain rights. As Christian leaders, when we are not the first, we need to work on placing our identity not on a title but on God. My work cannot give me a healthy identity; no other title can be my foundation. When you have a secure identity rooted in God, you can more easily exercise healthy emotional intelligence (Scroggins, 2017, p. 39), allowing you to interact with others with kindness and empathy and be a 360-degree leader.

Conclusion

The future of organizations in the twenty-first century is centered around the strength of their inner teams. The future demands more nimble, empowered teams with decentralized decision-making capabilities. Furthermore, the members of these teams will need to learn to hold each other accountable. Moreover, the role of the leader is to embody these principles and live them out so that others in the organization will understand normal behavior in the organization's culture. Twenty-first-century non-profit leaders must lead a team effectively by using vision as their compass. They will need to learn to cast a compelling vision to the team. To create a

healthy culture, twenty-first-century non-profit leaders must embody accountability at every level of the organization. They will also need to learn how to delegate better by identifying people they can take on the process of modeling, monitoring, and motivating. Twenty-first-century non-profit leaders know the crucial role of clear communication in a team. Moreover, twenty-first-century Christian leaders are 360-degree leaders who lead all around them and do so because they have placed their identity in Christ and not because they rely on titles.

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